Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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CLUSTER ONE: NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Submitted by Switzerland

Proposals concerning elements for inclusion in the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee

New reductions

The recommendations should give strong encouragement to new and major reductions in the currently huge nuclear arsenals, and to the effective implementation of all the promises already made in this area. We have taken note of the various methods suggested for arriving at this goal. Negotiations among all States directly concerned and new unilateral initiatives seem to us to be the most promising approaches at this stage.

The irreversibility of nuclear disarmament

If they are to be truly effective and meaningful, practical measures taken in the field of nuclear disarmament must be irreversible.

This means that the reductions, whether embarked on through unilateral initiatives or under bilateral agreements, should not be restricted to removing warheads from missiles, but should also include destruction of the missiles, destruction of the warheads and the placing of fissile material under IAEA safeguards.

The end of vertical proliferation

The nuclear-weapon States should reaffirm that the ending of all nuclear-weapon explosions and all other nuclear explosions, as provided for under the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, restricts the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, thus putting a stop to the development of new types of arms and constituting an effective measure of disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.

Tactical nuclear weapons

In future greater attention should be devoted to the problem of tactical nuclear weapons. By virtue of their low weight and small size, their sometimes less sophisticated safety mechanisms and their decentralized storage arrangements, some of these warheads, which are not at present covered by any binding legal instrument or any verification measure, pose a particularly high risk of proliferation. Such devices are easier to steal, and we consider that the risk of unauthorized use is by no means negligible.

We do welcome the various unilateral promises concerning their reduction and elimination, which were confirmed in particular in the joint statement made on 21 March 1997 by the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation concerning parameters relating to future reductions in nuclear forces.

However, we are not aware how far some of these announcements have been followed by practical action on the ground.

The parties to the NPT should therefore encourage all the States that possess tactical nuclear weapons to ensure that the same transparency prevails and the same confidence-building measures are accepted as in the case of strategic weapons.

In our view, there are no compelling reasons for linking the start of negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons to ratification of the START II treaty or the initiation of negotiations on START III.